

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): An interfacing method, wherein a plurality of network printers, which are provided with different kinds of film for image reproduction, are connected by an interface unit to ~~an image information~~ a network, the method comprising the steps of, in the interface unit:

- i) recognizing available kinds of film with respect to each of the network printers, which are connected to the interface unit,
- ii) selecting a network printer, which is among the plurality of the network printers and which corresponds to a kind of film coinciding with an output request sent via the network to the interface unit from a terminal connected to the network, in accordance with the results of said recognition, and
- iii) giving an output instruction, which coincides with said output request, to the thus selected network printer.

2. (original): An interfacing method as defined in Claim 1 wherein, in cases where there is no network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, a network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film closest to the kind of film

coinciding with said output request, is selected as the network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, and

an output instruction, which specifies said closest kind of film, is given as said output instruction, which coincides with said output request, to the thus selected network printer.

3. (currently amended): An interfacing method, wherein at least one network printer among a plurality of network printers, which are provided with different kinds of film for image reproduction, is connected by at least one of at least one of a first interface unit and at least one of a second interface unit to each of at least two interface units to an image information network, the method comprising in the first interface unit:

~~the steps of, in each interface unit:~~

receiving printer information from the second interface unit;

i)-recognizing available kinds of film with respect to each of the at least one network printer, which is connected to ~~an~~ the first interface unit;

ii) ~~sending information, which represents the results of said recognition, to the other interface unit,~~

iii)-selecting a network printer, which is among the plurality of the network printers and which corresponds to a kind of film coinciding with an output request sent via the network to the first interface unit from a terminal connected to the network, in accordance with ~~the results of~~ said recognition in the first interface unit and the results of recognition printer information

received from ~~another~~ the second interface unit; ~~or transferring said output request to the other~~
~~interface unit, which is connected to the network printer to be selected, and~~

~~iv) giving~~ sending an output instruction, ~~which coincides with said output request, to the~~
~~thus~~ selected network printer if the selected network printer is connected to the first interface
unit, and sending the output instruction to the second interface unit if the selected printer is
connected to the second interface unit; and-

the method comprising in the second interface unit:

recognizing available kinds of film with respect to each of the at least one network
printer, which is connected to the second interface unit;

receiving the output instruction from the first interface unit;

sending the output instruction to the selected network printer; and

sending results of said recognition in the second interface unit to the first interface unit as
the printer information.

4. (currently amended): An interfacing method as defined in Claim 3 wherein, in
cases where there is no network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with
said output request, a network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film closest to the kind
of film coinciding with said output request, is selected as the network printer, which corresponds
to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, ~~or said output request is transferred to the~~
~~other interface unit, which is connected to the network printer to be selected, and~~

an output instruction, which specifies said closest kind of film, is given as said output instruction, which coincides with said output request, to the ~~thus~~-selected network printer.

5-8. (canceled).

9. (currently amended): An interfacing method as defined in any of Claims 1 to 4 wherein, in cases where each of the network printers connected to the interface unit is designed to send a monitor signal, which represents a state concerning output, in accordance with a special-purpose protocol, and each of a plurality of terminals, which constitute the ~~image information~~-network, is provided with general-purpose displaying software functions and operates under management with one of plural kinds of operating systems having different forms, said monitor signal having been sent in accordance with said special-purpose protocol is converted into a signal according to a protocol, which is adapted to displaying with said displaying software functions.

10. (original): An interfacing method as defined in Claim 9 wherein said special-purpose protocol is a Simple Network Management Protocol, said displaying software functions is a World Wide Web browser, and said protocol adapted to displaying with said displaying software functions is a HyperText Transfer Protocol.

11. (currently amended): An interface unit for connecting a plurality of network printers, which are provided with different kinds of film for image reproduction, to ~~an image information~~ a network, the interface unit comprising:

i) a film kind recognizing means for recognizing available kinds of film with respect to each of the network printers, which are connected to the interface unit, and

ii) a printer selecting means for selecting a network printer, which is among the plurality of the network printers and which corresponds to a kind of film coinciding with an output request sent via the network to the interface unit from a terminal connected to the network, in accordance with the results of said recognition having been carried out by said film kind recognizing means,

wherein an output instruction, which coincides with said output request, is given to the network printer having been selected by said printer selecting means.

12. (original): An interface unit as defined in Claim 11 wherein, in cases where there is no network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, said printer selecting means selects a network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film closest to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, as the network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, and

an output instruction, which specifies said closest kind of film, is given as said output instruction, which coincides with said output request, to the network printer having been selected by said printer selecting means.

13. (currently amended): An interface unit, comprising: ~~a group of~~
~~at least two interface units, each of the~~ at least one of a first interface unit and at least one
of a second interface unit, two interface units connecting
wherein at least one of the first interface unit and second interface unit connects at least
one network printer among a plurality of network printers, which are provided with different
kinds of film for image reproduction, to ~~an image information~~ a network, each
wherein the first interface unit comprising comprises
a first receiving means for receiving printer information from the second interface unit;
i) ~~a~~ first film kind recognizing means for recognizing available kinds of film with respect
to each of the at least one network printer, which is connected to ~~an the first~~ the first interface unit; ~~and~~
~~sending information, which represents the results of said recognition, to the other interface unit,~~
and
ii) ~~a~~ printer selecting means for selecting a network printer, which is among the plurality
of the network printers and which corresponds to a kind of film coinciding with an output request
sent via the network to the first interface unit from a terminal connected to the network, in
accordance with ~~the results of said recognition from the first film kind recognizing means and~~
the printer information received from the second interface unit; and ~~having been carried out by~~
~~said film kind recognizing means and the results of recognition received from another interface~~
~~unit, or transferring said output request to the other interface unit, which is connected to the~~
~~network printer to be selected, wherein an output instruction, which coincides with said output~~
~~request, is given to the network printer having been selected by said printer selecting means.~~

an first output sending means for sending an output instruction to the selected network printer if the selected network printer is connected to the first interface unit and sending the output instruction to the second interface unit if the selected printer is connected to the second interface unit; and

wherein the second interface unit comprises

a second film kind recognizing means for recognizing available kinds of film with respect to each of the at least one network printer, which is connected to the second interface unit;

a second receiving means for receiving the output instruction from the first interface unit;

a second output sending means for sending the output instruction to the selected network printer; and

an information sending means for sending results from the second film kind recognizing means to the first information unit as the printer information.

14. (currently amended): An interface unit as defined in Claim 13 wherein, in cases where there is no network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, said printer selecting means selects a network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film closest to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, as the network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, ~~or transfers said output request to the other interface unit, which is connected to the network printer to be selected,~~ and

an output instruction, which specifies said closest kind of film, is given as said output instruction, which coincides with said output request, to the selected network printer ~~having been selected by said printer selecting means.~~

15-18. (canceled).

19. (currently amended): An interface unit as defined in any of Claims 11 to 14 wherein, in cases where each of the network printers connected to the interface unit is designed to send a monitor signal, which represents a state concerning output, in accordance with a special-purpose protocol, and each of a plurality of terminals, which constitute the ~~image information~~ network, is provided with general-purpose displaying software functions and operates under management with one of plural kinds of operating systems having different forms, the interface unit further comprises a protocol converting means for converting said monitor signal, which has been sent in accordance with said special-purpose protocol, into a signal according to a protocol, which is adapted to displaying with said displaying software functions.

20. (original): An interface unit as defined in Claim 19 wherein said special-purpose protocol is a Simple Network Management Protocol, said displaying software functions is a World Wide Web browser, and said protocol adapted to displaying with said displaying software functions is a HyperText Transfer Protocol.

21. (currently amended): A client apparatus, which is provided with the functions of
an interface unit as defined in any of Claims 11 to 14.

22-35. (canceled).

36. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 11, wherein the
kind of film is defined by a film size.

37. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 12, wherein the
kind of film is defined by a film size.

38. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 13, wherein the
kind of film is defined by a film size.

39. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 14, wherein the
kind of film is defined by a film size.

40. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 11, wherein the
kind of film is defined by a film base color.

41. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 12, wherein the kind of film is defined by a film base color.

42. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 13, wherein the kind of film is defined by a film base color.

43. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 14, wherein the kind of film is defined by a film base color.

44. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 1, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

45. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 2, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

46. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 3, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

47. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 4, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

48. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 11, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

49. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 12, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

50. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 13, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

51. (previously presented): The interface unit as defined in Claim 14, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

52. (new): The method of claim 1, wherein at least one modality is connected to the network and the selected network printer receives image data from the at least one modality via the network and prints the image data when the selected printer receives the output instruction.

53. (new): The method of claim 3, wherein at least one modality is connected to the network and the selected network printer receives image data from the at least one modality via the network and prints the image data when the selected printer receives the output instruction.

54. (new): The interface unit of claim 11, wherein at least one modality is connected to the network and the selected network printer receives image data from the at least one modality via the network and prints the image data when the selected printer receives the output instruction.

55. (new): The interface unit of claim 13, wherein at least one modality is connected to the network and the selected network printer receives image data from the at least one modality via the network and prints the image data when the selected printer receives the output instruction.